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AF improving odds of hitting moving surface targets

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ROME, N.Y. --- The Air Force has awarded two contracts, totaling more than $23.3 million, for research that supports the Affordable Moving Surface Target Engagement II program.

The Air Force Research Laboratory's Information Directorate is serving as the agent for the program to investigate and develop technologies to affordably engage moving surface targets such as tanks, tactical ballistic missile transporters and small boats from long ranges and in all weather conditions.

Contracts have been awarded to Northrop Grumman Corp. of Melbourne, Fla., ($12,192,544) and Raytheon Co. of El Segundo, Calif., ($11,169,729). Work on both contracts will be completed by the end of 2001 and will lead to further enhancements of the system architecture next year.

The two contractors will develop and integrate technologies for experiments that will be conducted at the Eglin Air Force Base Test Range, Fla., and the Nellis Air Force Base Test Range in Nevada. The program is primarily focusing on Ground Moving Target Indication radar, a sensor that can detect moving surface vehicles from long distances.

Moving ground targets pose a significant challenge to current weapon systems because of the dynamics involved. Idle vehicles can accelerate to speeds of 60 miles per hour in less than 10 seconds, and stop shorter periods of time. While typical military vehicles do not tend to accelerate or stop that fast, they still pose a significant challenge maintaining accurate tracks. Vehicles also tend to mix with other vehicles, travel within groups or convoys, start and stop often, and use terrain to block their detection.

Several initial studies conducted over the past year investigated the feasibility of precision engagement of moving ground targets using advanced sensor systems. The results of these studies concluded that obtaining the high accuracy required for precision fire control is possible; however, the real challenge is maintaining the track of the target during the battle management process.

Directorate engineers will use technology in development over the next several years to enhance the capability to strike these moving ground targets with precision accuracy. **@**